

Blackburn with Darwen Council's School Community Resilience Project

Sarah Riley

Sarah Riley, Civil Contingencies Officer at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) shares a good practice Case Study and promotes 'The Schools Community Resilience Project', which has now been accredited by Wolverhampton University and is being made available nationally.

Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen's Borough Council, School's Community Resilience Project is an educational resource tool for primary schools to utilise; with the aim of promoting Community Resilience and encouraging children (and parents) to be aware of the potential impacts on families in the event of an emergency situation. This innovative accredited project has been produced by local multi agency partners, it provides primary school teachers with the tools and resources to deliver fun and interactive lessons across all specified curriculum areas. Having been shared locally and regionally BwDBC are now in a position to share this nationally.

The challenge

The need for the project was identified from the research undertaken by Sarah for her the PG Cert on 'Designing a framework for the implementation requirements for a Community Resilience Programme for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Partners and all other local Category 1 Responders' (SJ Harris, 2010), along with the recognition of the need to:

- Build community resilience across the Borough
- Encourage schools to engage in preparedness and act as a mechanism of raising awareness within communities
- Motivate primary teachers to recognise the importance of equipping children at an early stage with the tools and coping strategies in the event of an emergency
- Equip primary teachers with the resources to deliver lessons devised by multi agency representatives covering an array of emergency related topics
- Work collaboratively with the emergency services in order to continue to delivery key emergency and preparedness messages to schools in these times when all agencies have limited resources



The solutions

The Schools Community Resilience Project (SCRP) was developed by BwD Civil Contingencies Service with the support of BwD Schools and Education Service, in partnership with local emergency services with the aim to: - Prepare students with an awareness of emergency planning and preparedness to enhance self-resilience within our community.



The Project is aimed at Year 5 children as a “pull of the shelf” resource pack to be tailored and utilised by Teachers as they wish – not just Year 5’s. It is a fun and interactive pack which is full of resources from; lesson plans, guidance cards, homework suggestions, interactive games, research links, 50+ multi agency question and answer video clips, and hoax 999 call examples, etc. There are pre-post questionnaires for pupils and teachers, summary document and a short video (from a Teachers and pupil’s perspective demonstrating the success of the project. It was crucial that all of the information and resources provided for the schools to use were listed against the relevant sessions and that each session tested student’s skills of negotiation, reasoning, research and understanding, and quick thinking to demonstrate key stage skills in the national curriculum PHSE key stages.

The Project has been rolled out across BwD Primary schools, given its success and rather than Local Authorities having to re-invent the wheel BwD Council are now in a position to offer this accredited resource pack to other authorities/ agencies not only regionally but nationally, providing the opportunity to utilise this extremely useful resource. In order to produce the final product, the project underwent three pilots which were very successful and lessons identified were adopted at the time.



Given the strain on resources for all emergency services and Councils, this is a step in the right direction by providing communities with the starting blocks to becoming more self-resilient in the event of an emergency situation.

When an emergency happens the first people able to respond are those in the immediate vicinity i.e. Family, friends, neighbours; next are the emergency services, and then the Local Authority as necessary; therefore, it makes sense for communities to be resilient. If society is better prepared to respond to, and recover from an emergency, they are better equipped to manage the immediate aftermath, and longer term recovery phase of an emergency.

Why this works and how the new approach is being sustained?

The resource pack is designed as a 'pull of the shelf' resource that enables Teachers to utilise this in any way they wish, e.g. undertake weekly sessions, or one full week, or use just certain elements with younger pupils it is totally flexible to fit the Teacher's needs.

It has alleviated precious emergency services time by including their essential messages and linking into some of the crucial government safety campaign messages which are contained within the resources thus saving on the amount of school educational visits and provides a full picture of the combined Category 1 responders.



Once the School has the resource pack the project does not require any further administration, however if there are any requests or queries then we will endeavour to support.

The resource pack is available on Resilience Direct for multi-agency partners to access, BwD schools can access these through their shared drive and some of the resources can be accessed through www.blackburn.gov.uk website – again requiring limited management. We are also able to provide the resources on a USB.

Although we are in a position to share the basic resources as good practice, if there are requests for enhanced support for example train the trainer sessions there is a fee, however we have tried to keep this to a minimum covering staff time and travelling expenses.

The promotional video (available via this link <http://bit.ly/BwDSRP>) was produced following three pilots. The video has assisted the roll out of the project and provided Teachers with the confidence to undertake the project removing



any fears of the impact on their already extremely busy daily schedules.

Lessons identified

We knew this resource would be successful from the feedback that we received following the pilots. We have experienced first-hand the enthusiasm of the Teachers and the pupils, especially during the running and filming of the “Question Time” sessions along with the drop-in visits we and the emergency services were able to make during the pilots.



Being a brand new resource available for Schools we had nothing to benchmark against, however there are established methods of school engagement readily available; for example, the ‘What If’ campaign, and their school’s engagement project which was run by Essex County Council (Briggs, 2009) who we liaised with for permission to further develop the basic initial idea, and have adopted the lessons they identified.



All findings from the results of the pilots along with the recommendations from the Teachers questionnaires have been incorporated into the final versions of the lesson plans which also included the outcomes of the analysis of the pre-post children’s questionnaires. Wolverhampton University have reviewed our project and have accredited it for schools to use nationally rather than just locally.

Contact details

If you would like further information with regards to the project and content of the resource pack or would like to discuss please contact:

Sarah Riley

Civil Contingencies Officer,
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.
01254 585715 or 07791217316

Sarah.riley@blackburn.gov.uk

Civil.contingencies@blackburn.gov.uk

